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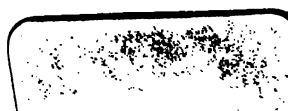
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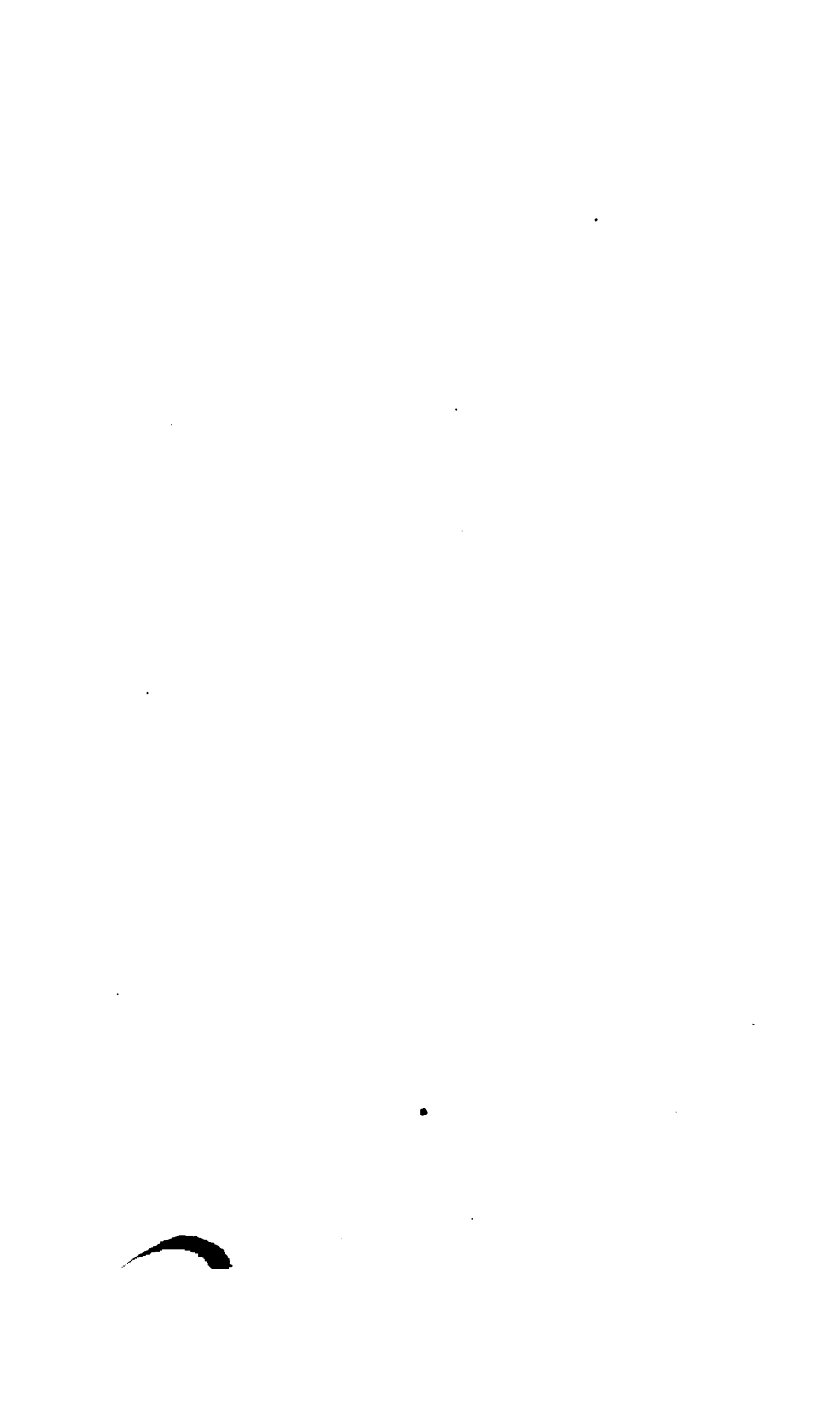
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CANDID THOUGHTS;

OR, AN

ENQUIRY INTO THE CAUSES

OF

NATIONAL DISCONTENTS

AND

MISFORTUNES

SINCE THE

COMMENCEMENT OF THE PRESENT REIGN.

L O N D O N :

Printed for W. NICOLL, No. 51, St. Paul's Church-yard,
1781.

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CANDID THOUGHTS, &c.

IT is the duty of every good citizen to be well informed concerning the state of the nation. If grievances are complained of, or misfortunes announced, he will enquire with solicitude, whether they really exist or not, from what sources they proceed, and what remedies ought to be applied in order to redress and remove them.

Without comparing the state of this nation with what it has been in any former period, it cannot be denied, that, during the present reign, signal calamities have been mingled with our prosperity. The clamours of faction have been loud and incessant. Jealousies and discontents have broken out in every part of the empire: a civil war, the most deplorable of all national disasters, has, for many years past, drained the blood and treasure of Britain; a combination of the most powerful foreign enemies has aggravated and protracted these evils, and brought us to the brink of destruction.

To what causes are these to be ascribed? Or who are the persons who have been instrumental in bringing them on? The question will meet with different and contradictory solutions, according to the penetration, prejudices, and interest of those to whom it is referred. Men of narrow understanding are incapable of comprehending that complication of causes with which political events are

necessarily connected. Remote from the channels of information, those of superior judgment often indolently acquiesce in vague conjectures, and plausible representations, which are widely distant from truth. Retainers to party, not only most readily believe, but too often invent and industriously spread, such accounts of public measures and the characters of men, as are the best calculated to insure them success in their pursuits after that pre-eminence and power which they envy others the possession of, and which they long to possess themselves; or to secure the enjoyment of those favorite objects, when success has once crowned their expectation.

To men of real integrity and patriotism, (who it is still to be hoped make no inconsiderable proportion of the nation) to men who wish to fix their judgment with candour, and to contribute to the true glory and welfare of their country, an attempt to investigate the causes of those grievances and misfortunes, which have happened to the nation since the commencement of this reign, may prove acceptable and useful. Such an attempt, pursued with impartiality and according to facts, though executed with slender ability, may, in some measure, assist them to distinguish between real and imaginary grievances, between such measures as have been blamable or praise-worthy, either in the friends or enemies of administration, to allay groundless fears and jealousies, and to point out that conduct and those exertions, which the true interest of their country demands. I enter on this undertaking with diffidence of my own abilities, but confiding in the rectitude of my intention, and the consciousness of impartiality.

Our

Our present Sovereign ascended the throne at a most auspicious æra. There is not in the annals of Britain, an example of any reign having commenced with a concurrence of so many circumstances, calculated to insure national prosperity and the reciprocal affection and confidence of the Prince and his subjects. Success, without interruption, had attended the British arms for the two preceding years of the war. Our enemies, exhausted and desponding, seemed to be compelled to restore the peace of Europe upon whatever terms Britain should please to dictate. A Prince born a Briton, claimed not only the allegiance, but the affections of his subjects, and the commencement of his reign was marked with the unfeigned joy and heart-felt gratulations of a flourishing and affectionate people.

It is painful at this hour to reflect, that many months of the new reign had not elapsed, till the murmurs of faction and discord began to disturb that tranquillity, which the national success and the character of the Prince had encouraged us to expect. The causes of this disappointment to the expectations of every good citizen, deserve to be investigated, and may be justly considered as the sources of many succeeding misfortunes.

First, The attachment of the Sovereign to the Earl of Bute, was soon displayed by signal marks of confidence and favour. He was called from retirement to offices of public trust, and in a few months appeared in the most important ministerial character. That the integrity and abilities of the man were intimately known to his master—that private friendship might be admitted to have some influence in the choice—that it was candid to suspend judgment, and to found approbation and

censure upon the actual measures pursued by the new minister, were arguments which could not find entrance into the ears of those, who were stung with the apprehension of losing that influence and pre-eminence which they had so long maintained. The power and preferment of Lord Bute, soon became an open and avowed topic of discontent—his abilities were condemned before they were put to the proof—his country and his countrymen attacked with the most virulent and licentious abuse. The indiscretion and the insolence of the favorites of Princes in former ages, and in circumstances widely different, were recited to rouse the terrors of the people. The impression of these arts of faction proved but too successful. Resignation succeeded resignation. The council of the nation was divided more than it had been since the beginning of the war, and at a time when the greatest vigour and most cordial unanimity were required—the tranquillity of the Prince was disturbed—the minds of the people were poisoned. At the same time, it is but candid to remark, that from the temper of the English nation, from former examples in history, and the influence of disappointed leaders of parties, all these disturbances might have been foreseen and expected, upon the sudden elevation and unrivalled influence of Lord Bute; and that nothing but necessity, if such existed, could have justified him for advancing so fast in the career of honours. I say, nothing but necessity could have justified him, for it was often asserted, that the ministry who had hitherto conducted the war with the greatest spirit and success, discovered but too great an inclination to protract it, however much the interest of the nation called for peace. If this was the case, there might be
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more patriotism and disinterestedness, and less imprudence and ambition in the conduct of Lord Bute, than what his enemies have been willing to admit. Certain however it is, that the promotion of Lord Bute, from whatever motive it sprang, whetted the edge of party spirit, and gave birth to animosities and jealousies which have not yet expired.

2. The odium of one minister, the overgrown popularity of another, introduced the present reign with circumstances, which were by no means favorable to the duration of public tranquillity. The abilities and success of Mr. Pitt can hardly be described in terms of exaggeration. By the boldness of his spirit, and the vigor of enterprises, a nation, lethargic, unfortunate, desponding, was quickly exalted to a pitch of splendor and glory unequalled in the page of history. If ever a minister possessed equal abilities, no one ever exerted them with such astonishing success. He deserved the confidence and applause of the nation. The confidence and applause of the nation were conferred upon him without reserve or limitation. Popularity and success reciprocally promote each other. The demands of Mr. Pitt for supplies, large beyond example, were gratified without a murmur, and the effectual application of these, still heightened the generosity of the people, and put into the hands of the minister such ample means of success as fully outweighed superiority of numbers, and every natural advantage upon the side of our enemies. At the commencement of this reign, the prosperity of the nation, and the popularity of the man who had been under Providence the instrument of that prosperity, have attained to their meridian.

It is perhaps vain to expect in human characters, that degree of moderation, which is necessary to maintain virtue unshaken amidst an overflowing tide of applause and prosperity. It were easy to bring examples from history to shew, that great power and success have sometimes overturned those very virtues upon which they were originally erected. The law of Ostracism among the Athenians, though productive of injustice and ingratitude to individuals, was expedient in a political view, in order to curb exorbitant ambition, the offspring of success and popularity, and to preserve that balance of domestic influence which is the basis of free governments. But whatever apologies may be drawn from the infirmity of human nature, it cannot be denied, that the arrogance of Mr. Pitt became intolerable. He claimed a monopoly of influence and direction, disrespectful to the Sovereign, and disgusting to his partners in administration. His resignation ensued. He entered again the lists of opposition. He had now acquired supreme authority over the minds of the people. His disapprobation alone was sufficient to stamp condemnation upon any public measure, and to render the authors of it suspected and odious. The use he made of this influence is but too well remembered. Did he ever, in one instance, approve of any plan of administration whilst he was out of place? Did he ever cease to blast, with the thunder of his eloquence, the characters of those in power, and to thwart and confound every measure which he was not allowed to guide? Hence the late peace, though concluded upon terms at least as favorable as those which he himself had dictated, was assumed as full evidence of the ignorance and wickedness of the administration
who

who succeeded him. Hence the repeal of the stamp act in America, and all the mighty mischiefs it has since brought forth. Whether this repeal was expedient or not, is a question which may occur in a subsequent part of these considerations. The fact I believe is well known. The repeal of the stamp act was, in a great measure, owing to the influence of Mr. Pitt. A new administration, in the most important question that ever affected the interests of this nation, were determined to embrace his opinion, in order to insure that stability which they could not expect from their own wisdom and merits. But to return particularly to the conduct of Mr. Pitt. If he would not agree to continue in administration, upon any terms consistent with the honour of the Prince and the respect due to his colleagues: if it was his determined plan, when he was himself out of power, to oppose those who were in power, it might have been naturally expected, and has been felt in experience, that neither caution, nor virtue, nor intentions however upright, could render any ministry, or any set of men, invulnerable by his attacks. Hence he had the fatal success to keep alive a distrust and jealousy of every future administration—he traversed and perplexed every measure going forward—he robbed his country of that established peace and pleasing confidence, which the government of the mildest of Princes ought to have produced—he divided the children from the father. If Chatham had not approved, a feeble opposition would not have dared even to have whispered an apology for the rebellion of America. Had he with his tropes and figures fenced the supremacy of the British Parliament, that man must have hazarded his blood who would have

have presumed to contravert the doctrine, and bring it to the test of argument. A rabble without arms, or discipline, or money, might, secure from danger, take the field against the veterans who had conquered for them a few years before, and might bid defiance to the threats, the power, and the wealth of Britain, whilst the man, who with despotic sway reigned over the opinions of the people, abetted their cause and applauded their virtue.

How mysterious are the ways of Providence ! That the same man should build up and pull down—that the glory and shame of a nation should stand so near to one another, be exhibited upon the same theatre, and affected by the same instrument—surely there is in this somewhat rare and unaccountable ! How ignorantly do we often wish for the continuance of life ? If that of Mr. Pitt had ended with his administration, would his abilities or integrity have been lessened in the estimation either of his friends or his enemies ? It is impossible to confine our judgment to any detached part of a man's life and character. We look backward and forward, and from actions previous and succeeding, our praise or censure of separate parts is raised or diminished.

They who are fond of moralizing, and of drawing useful instructions from the various events which occur in the history of nations, might perhaps in the opposite effects of Lord Chatham's conduct, read the vengeance of heaven against an impious and corrupt people—that the idol should fall and crush those who bowed before it—that a nation who put her whole confidence in the arm of one man, and neither looked up to Providence in trust or gratitude for success—that the same nation
should

should be depressed by the very arm that had exalted her—that by his councils she should be persuaded to renounce all the fruits of glory which his abilities had acquired—that from him she should learn the language of despondency, and tamely submit to disgrace and mortification. That all this should happen to Great-Britain, appears a dispensation of Providence so rare and signal, and, in its nature and effects so suitable and adequate to the species of our crime, that we may admit the most serious application of it, without falling under the reproach of a superstitious and gloomy imagination.

3. The admission of Tories into a share of administration, has often been urged as a ground of discontent under the present reign, and has had its effect in exciting jealousies in the breasts of many of his Majesty's well affected subjects. From the accession of the House of Hanover, with a very few exceptions, the Whigs only have been admitted to offices of public trust.

Though the Tories concurred in the revolution, took the oaths to King William, and were afterwards chiefly instrumental in bringing about the act of settlement,* yet it has been taken for granted, that the Whigs were more sincerely attached to the Hanoverian family, and the constitution of government formed at the revolution. It has likewise been alledged, that most of the avowed and suspected friends of the Pretender, were to be found amongst the Tories, who were also

* The succession of the House of Hanover to the crown of Britain, was enacted by Parliament 1701, when a Tory ministry was in power, and Mr. Harley, Speaker of the House of Commons, took the principal lead in that business. See BURKETT.

also supposed to have maintained principles opposite to the established system of laws and government. Hence as a predilection for Whig ministers, was extremely natural to Sovereigns of the Hanoverian family, so an exclusion of the opposite faction seemed justifiable in a political view and upon constitutional principles. The admission of Tories into administration was therefore an innovation, and a specious topic of objection held forth to the jealous and discontented. To employ them was represented as a measure of ingratitude, and a prelude to arbitrary power.

In a nation where the liberty of the press is indulged almost without restriction, there is not a measure of government that may not be represented in such a light, as to raise the alarm and discontent of the people. The great body of mankind are incapable of tracing effects through the labyrinth of political causes—they are influenced by passion more than by reason—it is only necessary to ascribe to any measure consequences which they abhor, in order to insist them in a determined opposition to the measure itself. This is more especially the case where the predominant passion interferes. Men, who in other instances give full proof of understanding and penetration, will often appear deaf to the voice of reason when under the influence of the over-ruling passion. Nations as well as individuals are subject to such an influence. In France, affection to the person of the monarch—in Britain, attachment to liberty and the constitution (a more substantial object) bears irresistible sway over the inclinations of the people. To render any measure therefore detestable to the people of England, it need only be represented as dangerous to liberty. The admission
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of Tories to administration was represented as dangerous to liberty. Was it so in reality? Let us not be carried away with the violent clamour of faction—let us hear the calm voice of reason.

To exclude any denomination or body of men from sharing in the trust and honour of administration, farther than as they are defective in the principles or abilities essential to the faithful discharge of them, is equally repugnant to justice and sound policy—to entail infamy and the frowns of the Sovereign upon particular families, and to punish the children for the iniquities of the fathers, if they have not been partakers of the guilt of their fathers, is a rule of government against which every upright heart must revolt. In vain do we boast of the excellence of our constitution, if it is calculated for the narrow purpose of raising one part of the community upon the ruins of another. Where is justice if you find guilt without a proof, or impute to men those very principles which they profess to abjure and detest. The moment when any party of men are known to depart from the dangerous prejudices of their fathers, that moment the partition wall should be broken down, and they ought to be promiscuously taken in, to partake with their fellow citizens in the common honours and emoluments of the state.

An exclusive plan of governing is no less inconsistent with sound policy. If the Tories were suspected of disaffection either to the Prince or constitution, it might have been a question whether a well guarded confidence, and moderate share of trust, might not have proved the most successful method to conquer their prejudices and conciliate their affections. Disgrace and mortifications affixed to any denomination of men, by
custom

custom and the professed maxims of those in power, only rankle in their breasts, and render them vigilant to seize the first opportunity to overturn that government, under which they find themselves stigmatized and oppressed. The Roman method of proscription, though more cruel, was more political; as it effected the total extirpation of those, who were known to have any interest or wishes incompatible with the power and safety of the persons who had got into their hands the reins of government. That the happy day for abolishing all distinctions, for reconciling justice with good policy, and uniting all classes of men in affection to the family upon the throne, was arrived at the commencement of this reign, will, I think, be obvious to every one who candidly attends to the following observations: The spirit of liberty has been spreading and gathering strength in this nation, since the happy æra of the revolution. Enlargement of sentiment with respect to political subjects, unknown in former times, is now discovered among all ranks of men. The common rights of mankind are better understood. Questions relating to the interest of the people, formerly intricate and doubtful, or wilfully embarrassed and kept in suspense by ministers, are now cleared up and defined with precision. A blind attachment to prerogative, is hardly to be found among any class of men; and the laws are universally admitted as the only rule of royal authority. All men are more or less tinctured with the prevailing sentiments of the times. Tories, or those who are called such, but who ought more properly to be called the children of Tories, are now professed friends to liberty and the constitution.

If any man still obstinately contends for a distinction of families—I ask him how it is possible to ascertain that distinction? Have Whigs and Tories, like the different Indian casts, inclosed themselves within certain barriers never to be broken down, and prohibited intermarriages with those who are not of their own class and way of thinking? Whilst the name of a political distinction has been retained, has not the blood of those to whom it is affixed, intermingled in their posterity? If guilt runs down in the blood of Tories, let the pedigree of families be traced, and how few of those who boast of the name of Whigs will be found untainted with the contagion. Nothing but the absurdity can equal the injustice and illiberality of perpetuating the distinction between Whig and Tory.

If after all it should be insisted upon, that a manifest preference is given to Tories, which has turned the balance of power to their side, I would desire any man who is of this opinion, carefully to inspect the Court Register of every year since the accession of his Majesty to the throne—after the best information he can obtain about the pedigree of persons who fill the lists of offices, he will perhaps find it not a little perplexing to decide under what standard they fall to be marshalled—but should he, after the most deliberate calculation, resolve, that the names of Tories out-number those of the Whigs, and that the scale of power inclines to their side, yet in justice it still becomes him to enquire, whether this ought not to be imputed to accidental causes, and the caprice of faction, more than to the influence of a minister, or the inclination or fixed purpose of the Prince? When the distinction between Whig and Tory was invidiously
revived

revived at the beginning of the present reign, it was the avowed resolution of some of the most eminent Whig families, not to take any part in administration unless the Tories were utterly cast out. The necessary effect of this resolution, under the government of a Prince determined not to sacrifice equity to faction, must have been to diminish the number of Whigs, and to increase that of Tories, who enjoyed places of administration. But in such a case does not the Prince stand acquitted of all charge of partiality, and ought not the decline of the interest of the Whigs to be fairly imputed to their own obstinacy, pique, and resentment?

4. The troubles which have befallen the nation in the present reign, are, without any controversy, to be imputed, in a great proportion, to relaxation in the executive power, which has tamely looked on, whilst licentiousness, in every corner of the empire, has swoln to a pitch incompatible with the order, peace and dignity of government. What was there that the most malicious ingenuity could invent, in order to loosen the affections of the people from the Prince, to vilify the persons of ministers, and render government contemptible and odious, that was not actually said and written, and published at the beginning of this reign. We know that no private character can bid defiance to the attacks of malice. There is in human nature a propensity to believe the worst, and even the most candid are but too ready to think that bold assertions, to the disadvantage of a man's character, are not altogether without foundation. Misrepresentations of the conduct of persons in stations of public trust, are still more successfully injurious, through the additional influence of envy, and that jealousy

jealousy of liberty, which is the characteristic of British subjects. Can it be doubted that the minds of the people have been perverted, and their confidence in government shaken, by that outrage of abuse which has broken down all the fences of dignity and innocence, with which the most respectable characters in this nation are surrounded? The success of Mr. Wilkes, and the ascendant he acquired in the metropolis of this kingdom, are notorious proofs, that there are seasons when neither falsehood nor profligacy in any degree counteract the virulence of the poison which they diffuse. Ought not some measures to have been adopted, in order to stop such enormous licentiousness? Is not a certain veneration due to the magisterial character? Is not a certain degree of confidence in rulers necessary, to give success to those plans which they are carrying forward with a view to the public good? Can it serve the cause of the nation, in any instance, to confound all distinction between right and wrong—to call faction liberty, law tyranny, and to ascribe the very worst motives to the best intentions? Shall the reputation of every private man be guarded by law, and shall the meanest and most abandoned of the people be suffered, with impunity, to assassinate the character of the Prince?

If the evils complained of are already provided against by law, why was not the law put in execution? If, in this respect, the laws already existing are weak and defective, justice and sound policy require that they should be reformed and invigorated. That the statutes already enacted were sufficient to curb such outrage of licentiousness, may be inferred from facts upon record. Any one who will be at pains to consult the State Trials,

since the accession of the Hanoverian family, will find, that the severest censures of law have been inflicted upon the authors and publishers of writings, which are reserved and cautious, in comparison with those which have daily circulated under the present reign, without the notice or controul of persons in power.* Here then the persons invested with the executive power must certainly have been in fault, and to their neglect and timidity we must, in some measure, impute the enormous progress of licentiousness and slander, and the discontents, jealousies and hatreds, which these have disseminated in the hearts of the people.

Am I then an enemy to the liberty of the press? God forbid! I am only an enemy to calumny, to injustice and disorder. Let every man be permitted not only to think for himself, but let him do all he can to persuade others to think as he does. Let the conduct of ministers be examined with a jealous scrutiny—let their errors be published through the whole nation—let the bell of alarm be sounded the moment that one peg of the glorious fabric of our constitution is touched—but let public as well as private virtue be protected from the wounds of calumny—let honour be given to whom honour is due. Is the crime of malice and falsehood extenuated by the dignity of the person against whom it is levelled, or the extent of the mischief which it means to produce? Shall the assassin, in order to mitigate the severity of law, plead that he hurt not the extremities, but thrust a dagger into the very heart and seat of life. Away with that

* The fate of Atterbury, Sacheverel, Mathews the printer, and Shebbeare, warrants this assertion.—Compare the most exceptionable passages in their writings with the North-Briton, Letters of Junius, &c. &c.

that liberty of the press, which defeats the very end which it was intended to serve. The liberty of the press was intended to inform the people, to remove that ignorance which is the mother of slavery, as well as of superstition. This privilege is certainly abused when the people are misinformed, and instead of being animated to contend for their rights, are inflamed by a tumultuous rage, which threatens the destruction of that constitution upon which their liberty and privileges depend. The loss of sight is a deplorable calamity, but to all purposes of use and safety in life, a man had better be blind, than have eyes which misrepresent external objects, and level the precipice towards which he is moving without apprehension of danger.

But the intolerable licentiousness of the press is not the only evidence of that feebleness and relaxation of government, which has marked the conduct of succeeding administrations in the present reign. We have seen in the compass of a few years many enquiries carried on, with respect to mismanagement of trust, abuse of power, misconduct of Generals and Admirals—but has ever one of these been brought to an effectual issue—nay, have they not served as fresh evidences of the impotency and fatality of government, and encouraged future delinquents, without the dread of punishment, to run out into more extravagant acts of irregularity and abuse, in the departments with which they have been intrusted? The riots in Boston upon enacting the stamp duty, afterwards at New-York upon quartering the soldiers in barracks, and again at Boston upon exacting the duty on tea, were all suffered to pass with impunity. What had government to expect but the repetition and increase of insults? A narrow compass of ex-

perience is sufficient to evince, that imprudent and unseasonable lenity is productive of the most extensive mischief and cruelty to the very persons towards whom it is exercised. Is it not confirmed by the history of all popular assemblies, that after they have been in the habit of violating the established laws, and have lost all respect for magistrates, concessions only serve to multiply demands, to aggravate their insolence and rage, and finally to subvert all lawful authority? A slight exertion of the executive arm, perhaps a single example of chastisement directed by the strict rules of equity and law, might have mercifully prevented that deluge of blood which has already been shed in the contest between Britain and her Colonies. Had members of parliament in opposition levelled their attacks against the weak side of administration—had they censured delays, fluctuation of councils, concessions derogatory to the honour of the nation and Prince—the wishes of the most virtuous and disinterested of the people might have insured their success, and they might have proved the happy instruments of averting or alleviating the heavy calamities under which we groan. But, alas! unhappy nation! from this very quarter has been derived the increase and confirmation of public distress—which leads me to observe,

5. That the immorality or want of principle in opposition, has been the most fertile source of national adversity. It is an old observation, that the highest outrage of iniquity can only be attained by mankind in a social and confederated state. The association of numbers allays the fears, and animates the courage of the individual. Disgrace and danger seem to be lessened or totally annihilated, by being scattered and divided among the multitude,

multitude, and in compensation for the loss of that legitimate applause, which is only due to virtue, they have erected among themselves a bank of spurious fame, which is paid out in proportion to the boldness and success with which each member pursues the interest of the party to which he clings. Thus men who are leagued in political faction, run headlong into those measures, which, if left to themselves, they could neither have contrived, nor dared to own. It will be difficult to find in the history of this or any other kingdom, an example of faction more dishonourable, inconsistent and outrageous, than that which has embarrassed the measures of administration in the most critical juncture of affairs. I shall just mention a few of those characteristics which mark the gross immorality of opposition in parliament, from the beginning of the present reign, and particularly of late years, during our unhappy contest with our Colonies.

Opposition, from the beginning of this reign, has been a thing too much personal. Instead of opposing the men upon account of the measures, the measures, whatever they be, are opposed and contradicted upon account of the men who propose them. In the late reign (upon which I mean to throw no reflections) the opposition to Sir Robert Walpole's administration was founded upon principle, and had for its object the overthrow of an avowed and notorious system of corruption. But such is now the contention and eagerness of opposition, that they have not only wasted time and forfeited dignity, by descending to the most frivolous topics of debate, but have crossed measures of evident utility to the nation, and have even sometimes been reduced to the awkward situ-

ation of traducing those very plans which they themselves contrived.*

In all former instances of opposition, it was a determined plan to watch with a critical eye the conduct of those persons, to whom administration had entrusted the executive part of government—hence the most powerful motive to render ministers cautious and disinterested in the choice of their servants, and hence the greatest inducement to these to perform their duty with diligence, fidelity and vigour. It was almost impossible that any example of remissness or misconduct or treachery, could escape with impunity. And hence by this plan, from whatever principle it proceeded, the public success and welfare were promoted. Directly the reverse of this have been the plan and effects of the late opposition in parliament. To distress administration, they have not scrupled to sacrifice the interest of the nation, and have uniformly taken into their protection every man who has been unsuccessful or treacherous in the discharge of duty.

Opposition has laboured to depress the spirits of the nation, by exposing and magnifying all her weaknesses and danger. The child, whose heart is inspired with a sense of filial veneration and gratitude, will be slow and reluctant to apprehend the danger which threatens that life which is to him most precious and desirable. Which is to be accounted the true patriot, the man who beholds
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* Recollect the enquiry concerning Greenwich hospital—Opposition to the bill for taking away the privilege of the servants of members of parliament—The high tone of dignity they assumed about the affair of Falkland Island—The abasing terms in which they have spoken of the strength and resources of Britain since the commencement of the American war.

with sorrow the wounds of his country, and touches them with a gentle hand, and pours in balm to soften and to heal them—or he who lays them open to the derision and insult of those who have inflicted them, and by the rudeness with which he handles them, and the neglect of timely and proper remedies, gives them a deadly effect.

The immorality of opposition has been most glaring, from the methods to which they have resorted, in order to shake the fabric of administration. Unable to make any impression by argument and fair attack, they have employed unlawful and violent weapons—they have called associations, and encouraged tumults, and put the minds of the people into a state of fermentation, at a period of emergency, which required the undisturbed and cordial co-operation of all classes of men.

The immorality of opposition, appears from the grossest inconsistency in the conduct of individuals who stand foremost in the list of its champions. It is impossible to conceive a more perfect contradiction of sentiments and language, than what has been declared by the leaders of minority in both houses of parliament. We have beheld the very men, who founded the subjection of America to the British parliament without limitation, and who confirmed that subjection by a declaratory statute, in the course of a few years approving of a rebellion in America, upon account of a slight exaction of supply in conformity to that statute.*

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* The Marquis of Rockingham was first lord of the treasury, and General Conway secretary of state, when an act passed, intitled, “ An act for the better securing the dependence of his Majesty’s dominions in America upon the crown of Britain.”

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We have seen the man who proposed the American tax, or who presided in administration when it was proposed, and who still pursued consistent conduct, after he had retired from office, by defending the measure, and contending for the necessity, of enforcing the submission of America by power of arms—we have seen that very man, who thus defended the justice and necessity of the American war, at last condemning another administration for sustaining the cause which he had begun, and, like a cowardly and treacherous general, turning

This act declares, That the King and Parliament of Britain had, hath, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force to bind the Colonies and his Majesty's subjects in them, in all cases whatsoever.

General Conway declared in the House of Commons, October the 26th, in the debate upon American affairs, That he wished to see the declaratory act repealed—Why?—Was it because he thought it wrong, and was in his heart against it?—By no means, for he added, It had been passed under his auspices, and on abstract, legal principles, he thought it right, and at the time of passing it proper and necessary.

If this distinction between what is really right, and what is so on abstract, legal principles, is admitted, it were to be wished that the legislature, as often as it declares any of the rights of the crown or parliament, would at the same time give some hint, by which it might be conjectured to which of these they refer, and whether they have decided upon abstract and legal, or upon plain and practical principles, lest the executive servants of government should mistake, and speculate, where it was meant that they should act—or rashly act, where it was meant that they should only speculate. If this distinction is once admitted, the science of law must become tenfold more vague and intricate. The student must not rest satisfied with collecting and remembering facts, which, from their number and variety, afforded sufficient labour to the mind—but he must pry into the hearts of legislators, he must detect mental reservation, he must distinguish between what is right and proper in an abstract and practical view. Some compensation of amusement, however, he will derive from the scope that is given to ingenuity and imagination, employed in the place of judgment.

turning his back and deserting his soldiers in the very heat and extremity of the attack to which he had led them on. * We have seen the very man, who

* Duke of Grafton.—It was very extraordinary (said Mr. Burke in his celebrated speech upon American affairs, May 8, 1770) that the great person who was the foremost for repealing the stamp act, and that too upon the principles of the Americans themselves, should, when he found himself at the head of ministry, be the very person to invent a new system of taxes upon the Colonies; and it is very certain, that at that period his Grace never disavowed the charge. Nay, after he resigned his office of first lord of the treasury, he made a public declaration, that he would continue to support the measures of government. The American measures, or measures relating to America, were the most important which were at that time agitated in parliament; and it is but a fair construction to suppose, that he had these in his view—his subsequent conduct confirms this construction—for he was as good as his word, and for two years urged the necessity of coercive measures against America. It is true, his Grace afterwards declared, (October 25, 1775) that he had been deceived and misled to give his countenance to measures which he never approved, and in particular that of coercing America by force of arms—and he afterwards declared, that he had been secretly, or in his own mind, against the plan of taxing America, and had suggested the plan of drawing back one shilling per pound in Britain, and imposing threepence per pound in America upon tea, as a species of tax the least obnoxious. May not Lord North, Lord Hillsborough, Lord George Germaine, or any other person in ministry, make the same declaration some years hence, when they are displaced, or quarrel with their colleagues in office? Was not this language from one who had been prime minister, and which was suffered to pass without reprehension, a very dangerous precedent, as it was in effect disclaiming responsibility? Suppose the total alienation of America from Britain, and that an enraged nation should call for an impeachment of the minister, or ministers, who were the authors of those measures which had occasioned the rending of the empire—it would be impossible for the most impartial to acquit any one who has presided at the helm of affairs since the commencement of this present reign, for all of them are guilty, nor would it be easy to determine to which of them the greatest share of guilt ought to be apportioned—whether to him who moved the stamp act, or

who formerly spoke of the people in terms of contempt which no provocation could justify, and who devoted the whole power of his eloquence to defend what was, perhaps, one of the most violent encroachments upon the liberties of the people, that ministry have dared to attempt since the period of the revolution—we have seen that very man, when degraded into the class of the people, addressing them in terms of the most strained adulation, prompting them to the most exorbitant, unconstitutional claims, and ascribing to them rights which annihilated the very use of representation.* When such sudden and entire change of sentiments

to him who repealed it, and substituted the declaratory statute; or to him who relinquished abstract views, and reduced that statute to practice, and imposed the tax upon tea; or finally to him who commenced war against America, denying subordination, and resisting the power of Britain, and who continued that war after the interests of America were entwined with those of our hereditary and most inveterate enemies. In these views, according to the received doctrine of responsibility, every minister stands forth an object of guilt—but allow the same privilege which the Duke of Grafton has claimed, give them credit for private sentiments and opinions, directly contrary to those measures which were carried on under their administration, and which were never heard of till the worst effects of them were experienced, and without remedy—let them protest against retrospective views, and draw the curtain of oblivion upon the past, and fall in with the current of popular sentiments, and impeachment can have no object, guilt is done away, and an injured nation disappointed of her resentment.

* Mr. Fox was the man who appeared upon the hustings at Brentford, and put up Colonel Luttrell in opposition to Mr. Wilkes, May 1769. He afterwards took the principal lead in the debate for the propriety and lawfulness of approving Colonel Luttrell's election, though he had only 296 votes, and Mr. Wilkes 1043. He was the great champion for that measure in all future debates upon that subject. When in administration he was a great opposer of Mr. Sawbridge's motion for triennial parliaments. He

sentiments attends the loss of power, who can hesitate to pronounce to what motive it ought in justice to be assigned? Who does not see, that in such men patriotism, like the religion of the hypocrite, is put on to serve a turn? Is not even the pretence of sincerity in such men, an insult to the understanding of every person of honour and penetration? Does not such glaring versatility and self-contradiction, to persons at a distance from the immediate scene of political exhibitions, suggest most melancholy reflections concerning the state of virtue in the most illustrious assembly of the nation? Must not virtue indeed be at a low ebb, where such impudent violation of integrity and honour is expressed without shame, and heard without indignation?

6. The American war from the beginning, and in its progress till this day, has been pregnant with the most dreadful calamities to the British empire. It is not to be expected, that any new matter can be offered upon a subject that has engaged the thoughts of every political writer for the last six years of this reign. At the same time, this Enquiry would be greatly defective, should it pass
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He has since professed a recantation of his former principles. Mr. Fox said, I will never acknowledge the voice of the people to be fully expressed any where but in this House. [See his speech upon the commitment of the Lord Mayor, March 27, 1771.] What did he not say in the course of last session to enforce respect for associations of the people? No man, at the commencement of these disturbances, spoke in a more decisive tone of the right of the British parliament to tax America, or contended more vehemently for coercive measures, or treated of the power of the Americans, in more vilifying and contemptuous terms. The justice of their cause, and the magnitude of the power of these thirteen paltry provinces, have lately been drawn by him in the most glowing colours. Mr. Fox was burnt in effigy at Boston.

in silence an event which men of whatever parties and interests agree in admitting to be the principal cause of national distress. That we may not misplace censure or applause, or mistake the remedy which our circumstances require, it is necessary that I should offer somewhat upon this subject, avoiding at the same time tediousness of argument and intricacy of reasoning, and insisting concisely upon those facts and observations which are most obvious and uncontroversial.

The state of security in which the American Colonies were placed by the late peace—their successful resistance to the stamp act—the illicit gain of smugglers, uncontrolled by a more vigorous execution of law—the ambitious views of individuals, and the prevalence of faction at home, all concurred to render it probable, that a plan of introducing or extending taxes in America, would meet with the most obstinate and violent opposition. Was this plan just and equitable? Was it wise and expedient? If it was not just and equitable, no prospect of gain to Britain ought to have moved the proposal of it—it might be just and yet inexpedient, if it could not be compassed without expence of blood and treasure, which no success in the issue could repay. Let us give our attention to each of these questions—first, Was this plan just and equitable?

That every state ought to contribute to the support of that government by which it is protected, is a maxim of justice so obvious, that no argument can render it more clear and convincing. That America ought to contribute to the revenue of Britain, in a proportion adequate to the real expences laid out by Britain for her defence and protection, is a particular application of a general,
clear,

clear, and uncontroverted proposition. But besides compensation for the annual expence of protection to America, was not something more due upon the strict footing of justice? If America grew up to wealth and prosperity under the munificent aid and protection of Britain, was not some proportion of that wealth a due return for such aid and protection? If this protection had been merely declaratory, inert and inexpensive—if the name of the alliance of Britain had been barely sufficient, to have overawed the nations who had any interest or wish, to disturb the peace of our Colonies advancing to strength and prosperity—in such circumstances we must have appealed to gratitude rather than to justice, and our claims must have been proposed with greater moderation and reserve. But if on the contrary, the welfare of America has been a costly cause—if the blood and money of Britain have been profusely wasted for her defence and security—if the late war was chiefly undertaken in her behalf, and added an accumulation of millions to the debt of the nation—if Britain was loaded with new and oppressive taxes to discharge the interest of that debt—was it unjust or tyrannical to call for the assistance of America, or demand a tax in order to alleviate the weight of a burden incurred upon her account? Was it in America either generous or fair to refuse to comply with this demand, and to vouchsafe that aid which justice and the necessity of the Mother Country required? These are plain observations, and strike every man of common understanding.

I know only of two objections which may be brought to invalidate the force of the arguments which I have now adduced: first, It has been asserted that Great-Britain, by her exclusive trade with

are imposed. They fall heavy in the first instance upon the commercial body of men, who possess a great proportion of the wealth and power of the nation—they establish open hostility between them and the revenue officers, which is too easily and frequently transferred to the constituents. By seducing selfish men into perjury, the most consummate act of guilt, they render them an easy prey to every inferior species of iniquity, and at last subvert the morals of the people.

But it was not the tax, but the imposition of it by the authority of parliament, that was condemned by many of the friends of America on this side of the Atlantic. The injustice of taxation, without representation, was the argument urged by Mr. Pitt for the repeal of the stamp act. It is not to my purpose, at present, to expose the refinement of that distinction, which was currently admitted, between legislation and taxation; nor shall I undertake, in this place, what I think it were no difficult task to demonstrate, that legislation without representatives, is at least as unreasonable and unjust, as taxation without representatives; and that there is not any mischief or danger suspected from any one of these branches of authority, that may not as reasonably be inferred from the other. A power of legislation, untroubled by the negative voice of the people over whom it is exercised, would surely prove as fit an instrument of oppression as the most arbitrary monarch ever wished to get into his hands. I observe, in general, that if the scheme of taxation was once admitted to be just, reasonable, and necessary, an exception to the particular mode or plan of carrying it into execution, could never justify any individual or set of men, in pursuing measures

tures which evidently tended to frustrate or overturn the plan itself. When the American tax became the universal topic of conversation, about a dozen years ago, I hardly ever mixed with any company where a variety of opinions did not occur, and where different plans were not suggested, in the freedom of speculation, and perhaps after all, however opposite to one another, there was not one of them for which something plausible in the way of argument might not be said, and against which something plausible in the way of objection might not be thrown out. In short, of schemes and speculations there is no end. If the justice and necessity of taxing America were once admitted, what appeared the least exceptionable, or the most constitutional plan of carrying it into effect? Has not the parliament, since the revolution, been understood to be invested with supreme legislative authority over Britain, and all her dominions? Would it then have been safe in any minister to have departed from the fixed, constitutional mode of taxation?

I acknowledge, that members of the British parliament, as it is now constituted, could not be understood to have the same intimate connection with the provinces of America, and the same concern for their welfare, that they must have had for that part of the inhabitants of Britain who send no representatives to parliament; and therefore I never thought the analogy between the state of America, and trading towns in this island unrepresented, so exact as to satisfy the mind of any man impartially bent upon justice. But still taxation by parliament was the only legal, acknowledged method of levying money through the dominions of Britain; and if it involved peculiar
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hardships when extended to America, were ministry to be blamed for pursuing it? But what then was to be done in this situation? Was there no remedy? Must ministry insist upon taxing America by act of British parliament, or must America submit, though aware of consequences destructive of the freedom and prosperity of their country? Common sense will at once suggest, that as there is a very great difference between exacting and carrying into effect laws which already exist, though they may be prejudicial to the interest of the subject, and proposing to enact new laws of the same tendency, so they ought to be opposed upon different principles, and by different methods. In the first case supposed, that is, when ministry form their measures upon laws already existing, no reflection ought to be thrown out against them; nay, perhaps they may deserve praise for greater firmness and fidelity in the discharge of their duty, and redress ought to be sought in time to come, by a respectful application to the supreme legislative body of the nation. But in the other case supposed, odium ought justly to fall upon those who could have the wickedness to propose any new law manifestly founded upon injustice, and destructive of the welfare of any set of men. At the same time, if in such a case remonstrances, and more peaceable plans of resistance, should fail of success, the first principles of human nature would justify the boldest measures, in order to avert the dreaded mischief. This reasoning will apply to the dispute between Britain and her Colonies. If the taxation of America was admitted as necessary and just—if it behoved the ministers and parliament to follow the ordinary and constitutional plan of exacting it—

it—if this method was found, or apprehended to be productive, of peculiar danger when extended to America, remonstrances and petitions ought not only to have been presented, but some other plan soberly proposed more safe for America, and equally effectual to procure that aid which Britain justly demanded. Could ever America be justified for drawing the sword till such a plan had been proposed and rejected? * It has not been attended to, that grievances growing out of the constitution, or which follow from a minister's pursuing measures in conformity to the constitution, are to be considered in a very different light from those grievances which spring from innovation, or a change of the established laws, customs and government of a country. And it ought to be carefully remembered, that ministry did not frame new acts of parliament to pave the way for the taxation of America—they raised their system upon acts of parliament already in being, and upon the principles of the law as it then stood. †

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* It may be said, that terms of accommodation were proposed by Congress in the petition to the King, brought over and delivered by Mr. Penn. To say nothing of the illegality of that assembly, and the affront which the King and Parliament must have incurred if they had treated with them, I ask if this petition admits the power of parliament to tax America, or implies consent to taxation in any shape, or proposes to substitute any plan to contribute to the supplies of Britain?

† The right of the British parliament to tax her Colonies, was not so much as called in question in the House of Commons in the great debate upon American affairs, [Jan. 14, 1766.] for the declaratory statute was carried without a division. The same sentiments seem to have been retained by opposition at a later period. March 5, 1770, it was proposed by Lord North to repeal so much of an act passed the seventh of his present Majesty, as related to imposing a tax upon paper painters colours,

No government upon earth can be so perfectly modelled, as not to admit occasionally of certain inconveniences and grievances. Nay, laws originally formed upon the wisest and most equitable construction, may, from a change of interests and circumstances, give a sanction to the violation of those rights which they were destined to protect and secure. When equity and justice require that such laws should be corrected or changed, wisdom will direct that it ought to be done with temper and reverence for the constitution. Exaggerated representations of constitutional grievances, or grievances which grow of the constitution; illiberal abuse of government, and violent and precipitate plans of redress, only tend to lay in ruins that fabric, which a small degree of expence and labour, skilfully directed, might repair and embellish. The opposition to the American tax, as conducted not only by the Americans, but by their friends in England, and levelled at the authority of parliament, had too much the shape of an assault upon the constitution itself.

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lours and glass exported to the Colonies; but that the tax upon the tea, laid on by the same act, should still be continued, lest they should be thought to give way to American ideas, and to take away the other impositions, as having been contrary to the rights of the Colonies. It was answered by opposition, that this was an argument totally futile and ridiculous, because the right of Britain to tax the Colonies was sufficiently ascertained by two positive laws declaratory of that right, as well as by other taxes still existing in exercise of it.

“When Lord Chatham affirms, that the authority of the British parliament is not supreme over the Colonies, in the same sense in which it is supreme over Britain, I listen to him with diffidence and respect, but without the smallest conviction or assent.” These are the words of Junius, a great admirer of Lord Chatham, introduced with this observation—That we are not to expect perfection in any man. [See Junius’s Letter, October 5, 1771.]

The expediency of taxing America may still be objected to by those who allow, that the plan was not inconsistent either with law or justice. The opposition it was to meet with, and all the dreadful effects which have ensued, since the commencement of the unhappy war, were foreseen and foretold by more discerning politicians, and were irresistible arguments for dissenting from the ministerial plan of taxing America. I think I may venture to affirm, that there is not a man in or out of administration, who would have moved to impose a tax upon America, if he had certainly foreseen the fatal consequences which it has produced. And this is one considerable advantage of argument upon the side of those who originally opposed the American war, that they now appeal to events which correspond exactly with their predictions and warnings. It is certain, that the opinion of the world must, in a very considerable degree, be affected by success. Suppose any plan to have been formed, with as much wisdom and skill as human genius ever possessed, yet if it has miscarried in the issue, either from misconduct or mischance, over which the author had no power, he will not be exempted from that censure which, in strict justice, is due only to rashness and folly. I shall not now enter into a comparative view of the wealth, the resources, and the military force of Great-Britain and America—I shall only submit a few plain considerations to the judgment of the candid part of the nation who think for themselves, and have not yet resigned their understanding to the arbitrary dictates of any party.

Admitting the claims of Britain upon America to have been as just, and our superiority as clear, as was held forth by the friends of administration,

yet have not a variety of circumstances occurred in the progress of this dispute, to diminish the power and cramp the exertions of Britain, and to animate the courage and increase the strength of the rebellious Colonies? Has not the language of opposition from the beginning, been one continued vindication of American rebellion? Nay, have not encomiums and panegyrics upon rebellious generals, without a blush, been loudly founded in both houses of parliament? * Was not the inability of Britain to prevail against America, asserted by those who were supposed to be best acquainted

* A celebrated orator expatiated in the House of Commons, with tears, on the virtues of General Montgomery, who fell at the head of the rebel army before Québec. I am confident, that there is not a man in this nation, more disposed than the Author of these Observations, to make allowance for the influence of prejudice, and to give credit for virtue and principle, to men of different parties and sentiments in religion and politics. Suppose it should be admitted, that a man who had been born in Britain, and who had taken the oaths of allegiance to his present Majesty, and subsisted by serving him in the capacity of a soldier—suppose it should be admitted, that such a man, through misinformation or misconstruction of the designs of government, might, without any stain upon his virtue or patriotism, join with those who seek to destroy the interest or government of his native country, yet it is neither prudent or generous to make a public declaration of such sentiments. Do they not seem to disjoin the ideas of morality and patriotism? Do they not authorize latitudinarian sentiments concerning the attachment and duties which men owe their country? Do they not discourage the hopes of those, who seek for honour by steady perseverance in the plain path of loyalty, at the hazard of life and fortune? There were unquestionably in the number of those who were deluded by attachment to the family of Stewart, and who fell in their cause in the years 1715 and 1745, men of integrity and honour—but would it have been seasonable, decent, or lawful, to have given any advantage to such men, by exalting their reputation at a time when they were in arms against the family seated upon the throne, upon whose establishment all our most valuable rights and privileges depend?

acquainted with the strength, and most attached to the honour, of the nation. What might have been naturally expected from such conduct, has actually come to pass. The speeches of members in opposition quickly wafted over the Atlantic, and repeated in strains still more exaggerated and emphatic, have given a double advantage to our enemies, by nourishing their hopes, and depressing the courage and resolution of the friends of Britain. I make no doubt, but that thousands in America resisted the demands of government, prompted by the pure influence of principle, and an apprehension of the danger which, as they believed, threatened their liberties—but still, in the most candid construction, I am persuaded, that a far greater proportion were drawn into rebellion by an immediate regard to their own personal interest and safety. Now, considering the divided, embarrassed state of British councils, and reckoning merely upon chances, did not every motive of immediate interest and safety draw to the side of rebellion? The insults and depredations of mobs were certainly avoided—a change of ministry, no improbable event, might entirely reverse the state of things, render abortive the threats and preparations of Britain, and make the worse the better cause. At any rate, should these expectations be frustrated, and should the cause upon trial prove unsuccessful, from the number and influence of their partisans, and the distinguished lenity of the nation and Prince whom they had offended, an indemnity might certainly be expected, together with the speedy re-establishment of that peace and order which they had imprudently violated. Nothing but perfect unanimity in the British councils, and determined vigour and expedition,

pedition, could discourage a strain of reasoning so obvious and just, and prevent that fatal stubbornness of rebellion which it has confirmed. Let us suppose, that opposition in parliament had pursued a different system of conduct—that at the commencement of the discontents of America, they had employed all their zeal and influence to persuade her to submit her grievances and wrongs to a parliamentary discussion—suppose they had advised such concessions as could not, in any view, have exposed her liberties to danger—and suppose they had added threats to persuasions, and instead of depreciating, had employed the eloquence by which many of them are distinguished, to exhibit a fair view of the claims of the Mother Country, and the resources of which she was possessed. Can it admit of any question, whether, by such a tenor of conduct, they would not have obtained for America all the terms she could have demanded, consistently with law and justice, and stopped that torrent of blood which has almost exhausted the strength of the fathers and the children? Then should the blessing of the peacemaker have rested upon their heads, and generations to come should have called them blessed.

But let us reverse the picture—America has declared herself independent upon Britain—she has renounced the parent who gave her existence, and nourished her in her helpless years with a mother's tenderness—she has courted the alliance of that very power who sought her destruction, and from which she was so lately saved by an immense profusion of the treasure and the blood of Britain. The interest of America and France are now inseparably interwoven. Is it possible, that a mind inspired with just, moral ideas, can contemplate
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the conduct of America without a lively sense of indignation and abhorrence? The man who can behold filial ingratitude with indifference, must himself be deeply infected with the turpitude of guilt. Is there a son of Britain so abject, as not to be moved by the insults and wrongs which have been heaped upon the parent state? To complete thy infamy, O Britain! America independent, America leagued with the House of Bourbon—(alarming, disgraceful sounds!)—America still finds patrons and advocates among the patriots of modern days!—I could wish at this moment, O Chatham, to bury in eternal oblivion the errors and caprice of the man, whilst I recollect the hero bursting the fetters of disease and infirmity, and flashing indignation and fury upon that spurious son of Britain, who had the effrontery to name with approbation the independence of America. * In a domestic quarrel, when the nearest relations have fallen out with one another, nothing is more common than for the inveterate enemies of the family, with diabolical officiousness, to blow the flames of discord, in order to widen the breach, and to involve parents and children in the same common disgrace and misery. At some happy moment of coolness and reflection, the voice of nature, though long suppressed, is again listened to with respect, the powers of affection resume their wonted authority, a reconciliation takes place, the arts of incendiaries are detected, and by the parents and children they are ever after held in abhorrence. May such finally be the success and the reward of the abettors of the American rebellion!

But

* The Duke of Richmond, the most unwearied opponent of administration.

But it may be enquired, Does the whole burden of guilt rest upon the head of members of parliament in opposition? Are the calamities and prolongation of the American war, to be imputed entirely to the encouragement which they have given to our enemies, and the obstructions which they have thrown in the way of our schemes and operations of war? Was it even in their power to perpetrate the worst purposes of their heart, without the concurrence, or at least the indolence and timidity of administration? Truth, and not the favour of any party, is the object of this Enquiry. It is impossible for the warmest advocates of ministry, to cover them altogether from the charge of misconduct, in the different stages of the dispute between Britain and America. Some of their most glaring errors I shall now specify. And because there is nothing more easy than to be wise after experiment, and to tell how that might have been done better, which we have actually seen to have been done wrong, I shall confine myself to such instances of misconduct as were obvious, and condemned by many of the most impartial and penetrating, at the very time they were proposed.

Ministry, from the beginning of the American disturbances, have discovered a timidity and delay which have given great advantage to our enemies. In every part of America, and particularly at Boston, the servants of government were insulted, and the orders of government treated with contempt. Mobs every day became more frequent and formidable, and were acquiring entire ascendancy over the minds of the people—the bands of government were broken. Could it admit of a moment's hesitation, whether the season was not arrived when it would have been expedient to display,

play, at least in one instance, a vigorous exertion of legal power? The people form their judgment of the force and dignity of government, from what falls immediately under their notice and experience. From the tinge and quality of the stream, we judge of the fountain from which it issues. The feebleness and remissness of magistrates, naturally infuse into the minds of the people a contempt of the head from which their authority is derived—from contempt, the transition to resistance and open rebellion is short and easy.

The first effectual intimation of the displeasure of Britain, was by the enactment of the Boston port bill.* The operation of this to the disadvantage of the trade of New-England was more remote, whilst its effect in irritating the passions of the people was immediate and powerful. If you inflame the rage of an angry man, without curbing his power, you only increase the danger to which you stand exposed. When a multitude have combined against the established government, they lose sight of more distant interest, and despise every threat and intimation of displeasure that does not immediately reach their persons. Thus the Boston port bill operated rather to inflame than appease the disaffection of America, whilst it did not in any degree diminish their force, or interrupt their preparations, to shake off dependence upon the Mother Country.

Not less unfortunate was the next measure pursued by administration, in order to prevent the
extremity

* A bill passed the House of Commons, March 24, and received the royal assent the 31st, 1774, to discontinue the landing, discharging, lading and shipping of goods and merchandise at the town and within the harbour of Boston in Massachusetts-Bay.

extremity of proceeding to hostilities against America. It was proposed in February, 1774, that if any one of the provinces should make provision, or contribute to government, according to their respective condition, they should be considered as returning to their allegiance, and be taken into the King's peace.* To mingle rigour with lenity in a due proportion—to discern the precise point at which concessions ought to end, and force begin, is perhaps one of the rarest and most important accomplishments of a politician—for as, upon the one hand, a reasonable and prudent condescension to the prejudices and desires of the people, may nip the buds of discontent, and avert those civil commotions, which give the deepest wounds to the prosperity of a nation—so, on the other hand, there is a certain crisis in the humours and passions of men, after which all concessions and milder plans of reconciliation are construed into weakness and fear, and increase that temerity and turbulence which they were intended to mollify and compose. There were, I believe, very few persons unbiassed by the prejudice and influence of party, and acquainted with the history of similar events, who could doubt whether conciliatory measures or force ought to have been employed by Britain, at the period to which

* February 1775, it was moved by Lord North, that when the Governor, Council, Assembly, or General Court of any of his Majesty's provinces, shall make provision, according to their respective conditions, for contributing their proportion to the common defence, such proportion to be raised under the authority of the General Court or General Assembly, and disposable by parliament, it will be proper, if such proposal shall be approved of by his Majesty in parliament, to forbear, in respect of such province, to levy any duty, tax or assessment, or to impose any farther duty, tax or assessment.

which I now refer. The conciliatory bill, proposed in February, 1774, as might have been expected, instead of reclaiming a single province, only served to diffuse over the whole empire an impression of the fluctuation of ministry, to shake the confidence of friends, to raise the hopes of enemies, and extend their opportunity of providing materials for waging war against the Mother Country—but treaties of peace have fallen to the ground—the trumpet of war is sounded—the sword is drawn—and now do dispatch and activity atone for past neglect, irresolution and delay? Which leads me to mark the errors of administration at a more advanced period of this civil war.

The employing foreign troops was a measure liable to many exceptions, and has been probably, in part, the occasion of retarding the success of ministry in terminating the American disturbances. I do not intend to enlarge upon those common place arguments, which I think evince the ill policy of resorting to the protection of mercenary troops, in any case where unavoidable necessity does not require it. In a civil war, peculiar reasons aggravate the impropriety and danger of such a measure. Does it not convey to rebellious subjects an impression of the weakness and the fears of government, when it cannot rely upon its own internal strength and resources to enforce the measures which it has directed? Does it not irritate the resentment of misguided and undutiful subjects, to be in danger of falling by the hands of those against whom they have committed no offence, and who have no natural and original interest in the dispute in which they are engaged? Does it not teach an evil lesson against ourselves, and inculcate upon our revolted subjects the

the justice and necessity of retaliating, by resorting to foreign support and assistance? Has it not been actually pleaded by the Americans, as the motive of soliciting an alliance with the ancient and natural enemies of Britain? Is it not in the reason of the thing to be expected, that mercenary troops, who have neither from prejudice nor interest any attachment to the power who has hired them, may be easily debauched, and prevailed upon by more immediate and extensive gain, to turn the sword against those on whose behalf it was first drawn? Does not such a measure depress the spirits of the people at home, and weaken the reputation of the nation abroad? Has not the number of regiments levied with such expedition in every part of Britain, during the last three years of the war, fully demonstrated that the nation was possessed of ample internal force, and by no means reduced to the necessity of opening campaigns in America, with such a proportion of foreign and mercenary allies? If the same exertion had been made at the beginning of these disturbances—if the same ardour and success in augmenting our army and navy with British subjects had been encouraged by administration, it might have overawed rebellion, and perhaps prevented even the occasion of exposing our numerous troops to action.

If the incapacity or misconduct of those who are employed in the executive departments, justly lie at the door of the persons who have appointed them, never since the existence of the British nation did any minister stand under such an accumulated load of guilt. Will the most zealous advocates for the present administration deny, that they have been mistaken or unfortunate in the choice of the Generals and Admirals to whom the
most

most important commands have been entrusted. There are some facts which carry in their face such palpable evidence, that it is impossible the highest authority, or the testimony of ten thousand witnesses, can either strengthen or diminish the belief of the man who has been made acquainted with them—if ever any fact fell under this description, it is that to which our attention is at present directed. Is there any person of reflection in this kingdom, who still remains in doubt with respect to the behaviour of Sir William Howe? Is it possible that his personal assurance, or the testimony of his fellow officers, or their pompous celebration of his victories at Philadelphia, or the result of the enquiry in the House of Commons, can now convince any man that Sir William Howe acquitted himself in the American command as a wise and brave General, or as a Friend to Britain? Nay, I appeal to those who are conscious to themselves of having been originally prepossessed with the strongest prejudices in his favour, (of which number I confess myself to have been one) whether, in a single instance, their expectations have been answered? From the opening of the war, has not his reputation been in a gradual decline, till at last he has sunk into the most debased state of national odium and neglect? Suppose your prejudices for the General to have been so strong, as to have made you confide in him, notwithstanding his retreat from a conquered enemy on Long-Island, fully satisfied, that it was more prudent to attack the adversary by regular approaches—if you could have been persuaded that the flight of ten thousand men, obstructed by a dangerous ferry, could have been accomplished without any reflection upon the vigilance of the
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General—if you could still have been so diffident of your own judgment, as to have admitted implicitly of the propriety of lingering at New-York, whilst the enemy, who had abandoned it, were occupied in fortifying themselves at White Plains; after all this, could you with patience listen to any man, who should endeavour to persuade you that sixteen thousand men, flushed with victory, ought again to have been restrained from falling upon a panic-struck army, whose numbers were so much inferior to those of their conquerors? Could you calmly attend to any vindication of the General's conduct in embarking his troops, and exposing them to the dangers of a tedious voyage, when they might with greater safety have been conducted by land to the place of destination, or when they ought to have been employed in seconding the operations of Burgoyne's army, who, trusting to their assistance, had ventured into the most dangerous passes of the enemy's country? To the man who would still contend for the reputation of Sir William Howe, would you not reply—This is an insult to my understanding—my confidence is exhausted—I have hitherto been struggling against conviction—I have been a dupe to my own credulity and prepossessions for the wisdom of the ministry, and skill of the General—but now, feeling has at once restored my reason, and roused my indignation—the disgrace of my country covers me with shame—the injured honour of Britain touches my inmost soul. How art thou fallen, O thou who wert so great before!—Where is thy spirit, O Britain! Why does not indignation pervade every heart? Why did not ministry for once forget their fears? Why did not opposition forget their resentments? Why did
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did not the people, with one voice, demand vengeance upon the man who had degraded the honour of the nation, and plunged her into the lowest abyss of calamity and disgrace ! If America shall be lost to Britain, it is not the wisdom of a Congress, the generalship of a Washington, nor the numbers nor the bravery of the troops that he commanded, which have effected it. Generations to come shall, in the bitterness of their soul, execrate the memory of the man who by ignorance, dissipation, rapaciousness and treachery, protracted the period of gain and distinction to himself, and sported away the blood and treasures of his country !

The appointment of Admiral Keppel to the command of the fleet, might, perhaps with propriety, be adduced as another evidence of the imprudence and ignorance which ministry have discovered in the choice of their servants. In this instance, indeed, a greater latitude of opinion may, in candour, be allowed. With superior force he engaged the French fleet, discontinued the engagement, or withdrew from it, though he affirmed that he had soundly beaten them. He declined to pursue the enemy's fleet upon a lee shore, that is, whilst he was not more than ninety or an hundred miles from land. He has been tried by a court-martial and acquitted, received the thanks of both houses of parliament, and the applause of many mobs. Sir Hugh Palliser, the supposed cause of disappointing the Admiral's expectations of utterly destroying the French fleet, has been also tried and acquitted. Many think it difficult to reconcile these two decisions. The enemies of Admiral Keppel boldly assert, that he did not do all he might have done to destroy the

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French fleet. His friends must in secret regret, that however incontestible the latent accomplishments of the hero, and however unblameable his conduct upon the 27th of July, 1778, his success was but of little moment. The impartial part of mankind will observe, that the Admiral has rather been overpaid with applause, that a more liberal proportion of it could not have fallen to his share if he had utterly exterminated the French fleet, and that it would have been both modest and manly, to have reserved some part of it for deeds of uncontroverted success, and substantial service, rendered to his country.

The misconduct of Generals and Admirals, though in the first instance it draws disgrace and indignation upon their own heads, must finally redound to the reproach and condemnation of the ministry who employ them. In vain does the most profound wisdom reside in the cabinet—in vain are the best measures concerted and adopted there, if penetration is wanting to discover the corresponding talents which are necessary to perform and carry them into effect. The great genius of Lord Chatham, was in nothing more conspicuous than in that sagacity with which he penetrated into the talents and characters of men, with invariable success selecting those who were most likely to excel in the several departments to which he assigned them—and I do not mean to detract from his merit when I add, that this was perhaps the principal cause of the amazing victories and brilliant prosperity, which signalized his administration.

In defence of the conduct of our present ministers it has been pleaded, that at a period of emergency, which required the most intimate and cordial

dial union at home, they did well to pursue healing measures; and in order to convert and divide opposition, what plan more specious, than to commit the most critical operations of the war to Generals and Admirals who were connected with it. I am not, in general, disposed to think well either of the wisdom or honour of that policy, which postpones the interest of friends, in order to weaken and defeat the intrigues of enemies—but I oppose argument as well as feeling to this favourite plan, of calling out the retainers to an opposite faction, to command armies and fleets which were to engage in expeditions, of which they professed to disapprove upon principle. Might it not have been foreseen, that the misconduct or misfortune of such men, would furnish opposition with new arguments in support of the opinions which they had announced from the beginning of these disturbances? If success should not crown the attempt of Generals, who, by the testimony of all parties, were the most deserving of trust, and of whose abilities ministers especially must have been convinced, (since no other motive could be assigned for employing them) if under them American rebellion grew more obstinate and rancorous, the cause was desperate, and the farther prosecution of it vain and ruinous. The friends of opposition had not the same motives to prompt them to a circumspect and vigorous exertion, which must have influenced the friends of ministry; and if they really could have had the iniquity to betray their country, they might have done it without an equal hazard of censure and disgrace. The conduct of Generals and Admirals in the interest of ministry, would have been diligently enquired into—operations conducted by

them would have been watched with a jealous eye—every instance of bad success examined with the severest scrutiny, and actual misconduct set forth in such colours, as to have drawn on them the certain vengeance of the nation. Under the consciousness of guilt no hope of mercy could have been entertained. But suppose neither the abilities nor the integrity of Generals and Admirals, who have been employed by ministry, could have been called in question, were cordial obedience and bold exertions, to be expected from men whose minds were warped by connections in a different interest, and who, from the habit of opposition, had been inured to controvert and despise the sentiments of those from whom they were to receive their orders? When a sense of gratitude and zeal for the honour of a benefactor, co-operate with principles and regard to the public welfare, there is ground to expect the richest fruits of genius and abilities. The critical juncture of affairs required a combination of all those qualities, which, in the ordinary course of things, insure the fidelity, vigour and success, of those who led forth the armies and fleets of Britain. To the imprudent choice of ministers, in preferring the friends of opposition to the most important trusts in the executive department, we have good reason to ascribe some of the most discouraging circumstances which occur in the present state of the nation. Dissipation, trifling, and treachery, have been vindicated—retreats and fruitless rencounters have got the name and the praise of victory—the standard of national valour has been lowered—the multitude have shouted—the sober part of the nation have been constrained to acquiesce in the ridiculous and farcical triumphs.

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But in no instance has the conduct of administration been more justly liable to censure, than in the language they held, and the measures they pursued, at a more advanced period of the war, after the unfortunate campaign of 1777. Every one may well remember the effects which the total overthrow of Burgoyne's army, and the timid, wavering operations, and small amount of the success of General Howe, produced upon the nation at home. Every man felt, as for himself, the indignity and reproach which his country had sustained. A spirit of resentment run through the great body of the people. America had hitherto been attacked upon the formal resolutions of men in office, and with a caution which damped the spirits, and cramped the hands of those very men who were employed to carry them into execution. But now national honour, national resentment, every principle that produces the most strenuous efforts, achieves the most glorious exploits, and elevates individuals and societies above all the calculations of natural strength and resources, were bent upon the humiliation of America, and promised certain and speedy redress of the affronts and injuries we had sustained. Subscriptions were in every corner opened for levying troops—a martial spirit sprung up—the whole nation seemed ardent to rush into battle. Here was presented to ministry a propitious opportunity for pursuing measures, bold, spirited and decisive. What might they not have accomplished, had they cherished the spirit of the nation, and afforded it scope and opportunity for action? Are not the highest efforts of national fortitude, roused by preceding examples of disaster and reproach? Did ever the bravest nation in the world appear more

brave, than in those exertions by which they rose again from the lowest ebb of bad fortune, and repaid their conquerors with destruction? The repulse of Hannibal after the battle of Cannæ, brought more honour to the General and the army, than the most extensive conquests which the Roman state attained in the career of her prosperity. The sluggishness and despondency which overwhelmed this nation at the beginning of the late war, contributed to render the period that follows the most interesting and glorious that adorns the annals of Britain. Did ministry avail themselves of these arguments and examples? The ardour of the nation was quenched—the language of timidity was again adopted, and a conciliatory bill upon terms the most humiliating to Britain was proposed. The propriety of that measure let its reception testify. There is not an individual who retains the smallest spark of national honour, who does not trace the deepest affront to the plan of conciliation, which was proposed by ministry, adopted with the unanimous consent of both Houses of Parliament, and rejected by the American Congress with disdain. After all, in justice to administration, we ought to observe, that even their very errors are, in some measure, to be imputed to the obstinacy and contention of opposition, which, during the whole progress of the war, has clogged and thwarted the operations of government. Some of the most exceptionable measures, such as the conciliatory bill, have been actually embraced in the way of compromise with minority, in order to attain (what from late experience has appeared a vain expectation) the concurrence of all parties to restore their country, reduced to the lowest extremity by domestic quarrels

rels and disputes. Nor is it so easy a point, to decide who the ministry are. The body ministerial, like the matter of the animal system, is in a continual fluctuation, and liable to change. The men who were in the cabinet at the time of proposing the American tax, have some of them appeared in the most violent opposition to the war, which was the consequence of their own measures. The resignation of an office, or the change of a party, in one moment obliterates the remembrance of past transgressions, and perfectly purifies the soul. It is impossible to conceive any two persons to differ more from each other, than the same man differs from himself, when he happens to be in or out of power.

From what has occurred in the preceding pages, it must appear to every candid enquirer, that so far as the present distress of this nation has been occasioned by the errors and misconduct of persons at home, neither ministry nor opposition have been guiltless. At the same time it cannot be doubted, to which of these the greatest share of guilt ought in justice to be charged, and whether there can be any reasonable ground to hope for better success from a change of hands, and under the management of men, who, because they have not been gratified with honours and office according to expectation, have exerted their utmost influence, in conjunction with those who have sought the destruction of their country, and but too successfully prevailed to aggravate and protract her sufferings. From such men can we expect that energy, capacity and virtue, which, under the blessing of heaven, are necessary to recover the honour and prosperity of this nation? Without any deviation from the strictest impar-

tiality and regard to truth, many circumstances might be alledged, to extenuate that share of blame which is placed to the account of ministry. It is hardly possible to conceive a situation of public affairs more critical and perplexing, than that in which the servants of government found themselves involved at the commencement of the American war. From a series of measures (whether wise or unwise is not to the present purpose) pursued through preceding administrations unconnected with one another, perhaps of opposite interests and parties, a dispute between the Mother Country and her Colonies grew to be mature for decision. What was the minister of the day to do? To recede was impossible. To go forward dangerous. To make concessions to America was only to postpone the period of decision. The question would recur in a more intricate shape, and a sentence must sooner or later be pronounced. To plunge into a civil war, drew after it a hideous train of calamities—accumulation of national debt—decline of trade—bankruptcies—alienations of the affections of fellow citizens and brothers—a large profusion of the most precious blood of the nation. Was it matter of surprize, that a minister in circumstances so peculiarly delicate and trying, was perplexed, wavering, and fearful? Wherever he turned his eyes, difficulties and dangers started to his view. In whatever resolution he was to settle, he anticipated a world of reproach and opposition. If it was in vain to expect to unite the sentiments and interests of all the members of the state, was it not the more necessary to lessen the number of divisions, and to weaken the power of opposition? Is it matter of astonishment, that too anxious a pro-

prosecution of this plan has given rise to measures apparently feeble, fluctuating and inconsistent. I might offer to the consideration of the candid part of my countrymen, virtues and qualifications which ought not to be overlooked because they are found in a minister. I do not think, that the abilities of the person who now presides at the head of public affairs, would lose in a comparison with those of the most respectable persons who stand in opposition to him. His private virtues, which are not only an ornament but an essential qualification to a public character, I might place in contrast with theirs. I might compare his ministerial conduct with that of his predecessors in office. Was there ever a minister who exercised greater moderation and temper, in replying to the rudest invectives of his opponents, or who was so little prone to exert his power in resenting abuse and contradiction, or who was more disposed to give due weight to their arguments, and adopt, by their suggestion, any measure that really seemed calculated for national advantage? Or, finally, was there ever a minister whose integrity was less suspected? To confirm these observations I might remark, that in the esteem of the most judicious part of the nation, he stands as high as any minister ever has done within the remembrance of the present age; nor do I think that the odium of the people runs with such violence against him, as it did against some of the very men who wish to wrest the power out of his hands, when they formerly filled the seats of government.

With these observations I intended to have closed, believing that I had taken in every thing that properly belonged to the subject of this treatise. The increasing power of the crown, has been lately

lately enumerated in the list of public grievances, and represented as a just ground of national discontent and jealousy. The proposition has been moved in the House of Commons, and assented to by a majority of members. As in the number of these, there are found many names who are not understood to be adherents to any party, and who have not voted with opposition in other questions which followed that motion, it is but fair to ascribe their opinion to conviction, and an unbiassed regard to the safety of the constitution. A subject of such moment deserves the attention of every man who is a friend to his country, and who wishes to convey to others those sentiments which he is persuaded are most favourable to public good.

The influence of the crown may be enlarged or restricted by the prevailing opinion and prejudices of the people, by an accession or diminution of those privileges which are understood of right to belong to it, or by the temper and conduct of the Prince who fills the throne.

When the sentiments of the nation in general are favourable to monarchy, the Prince may not only act up to the plenitude of prerogative, but extend and stretch his power beyond those strict limitations of law, to which he would not even dare to approach in an age of jealousy and distrust. The distractions and miseries which overwhelmed Great-Britain after the subversion of the constitution, under republican, or, more properly speaking, military government, still fresh in the memory of the people at the period of the restoration, turned the tide of sentiment into an opposite channel, and afforded Charles the Second advantages for the extension of prerogative, which,
happily

happily for us, his indolence and love of pleasure did not permit him to understand and improve.

But though the people espouse sentiments unfavourable to monarchy, and are jealous and watchful against every innovation upon the constitution, yet from a variety of different incidents which fall out in the state of a nation, and against which it is impossible that any laws can provide, a great accession of power may accrue to the prerogative of the crown. Conquest, territorial acquisitions, and a necessary increase of offices, may throw an additional weight into the scale of prerogative, though the Prince be not ambitious, nor the people remiss and deficient in zeal for liberty.

And again, though the prejudices of the people may be against prerogative, and though no incidents may have happened in the state of a nation to increase it, yet a Prince of immoderate ambition, and ordinary talents, may contrive many effectual plans, and avail himself of many occasional circumstances, to augment his power and circumscribe the rights and privileges of his people. And here I must observe by the way, that as in a free state it is hardly possible for the Prince to make any considerable acquisition of power without the affections of his people, so their liberties will never be in greater danger, nor will there be greater occasion of jealousy, than at a season when a Prince courts popularity too much, and binds to vulgar humours and prejudices, however inconsistent they may be with the solid advantage and interest of the nation.* For the same reason
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* Had his Majesty complied with the numerous petitions presented to him in the years 1770 and 1771, to dissolve that parliament

ministers who stand highest in the good graces of the people, will be the most proper instruments to overturn the constitution, and may, without loss of esteem, establish such precedents as may weaken, in future times, the security of the subject, and counteract the spirit of our laws and constitution. I might appeal to recent facts in confirmation of these remarks. Mr. Pitt, in the zenith of his popularity, issued general warrants without hesitation, but who ever thought of calling into question the lawfulness of any measure, pursued by the man who so often and so loudly had declaimed in the cause of liberty and the constitution.

liament which had expelled Mr. Wilkes, and sustained Colonel Luttrell's election, and which had then existed only two sessions; or had he, in a later instance, complied with the petition of the Admirals, December 1778, to prevent the trial of Admiral Keppel, he might, with an immediate acquisition of popularity to himself, have established a precedent, which, in future time, would have been favourable to the extension of prerogative, and dangerous to the rights of the subject.

Allow that the House of Commons had done wrong, in sustaining Colonel Luttrell's election, and excluding Mr. Wilkes, yet if his Majesty had applied the remedy pointed out, and dissolved the parliament, might not ministry have availed themselves of the precedent, to have got rid, by a premature extinction, of a future parliament which was not enough obsequious to the pleasure of the court. Or allowing that Admiral Keppel had been invidiously accused, and from this consideration his Majesty had been induced to avert, by the interposition of prerogative, a trial, from which in that case the Admiral had nothing to fear, yet might not a succeeding Prince, less a friend to justice, have imitated the example in circumstances widely different, in order to screen from merited punishment a favourite servant, who had abused his trust, and actually tarnished the honour of the British flag.

Let any one who reads the history of the late revolution in Sweden, soberly consider, whether the states could have been deprived of their privileges, and the kingdom of its liberty, if the popularity of the Prince had not been so great, and the confidence of the people in him so entire.

stitution. The dispensing power exercised by the Prince, in laying an embargo on ships laden with corn, and prohibiting the exportation of it in October, 1766, was not only recommended to the Privy Council by Lord Camden, but defended afterwards in the House of Peers, by arguments which have not been heard since the reign of an arbitrary Prince.* But the very language which had grated English ears, at a period when the nation was deeply infected with the principles of slavery, was heard, without resentment, from the man who had pronounced a sentence in favour of Mr. Wilkes.

Let us now apply these observations to the present times, and enquire how far any of the causes
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* November 24, 1766, a bill was brought in by a servant of the crown, to indemnify all persons who had acted in obedience to a late act of council, Sept. 26, 1766, laying an embargo upon ships loaded with corn. Members in opposition were not satisfied with the terms of the bill, because it did not fully express the illegality of the measure, and include those who had advised it. The bill was therefore amended and extended to those who advised, as well as to those who had acted in that measure. When it was brought to the House of Peers, to the astonishment of his old friends, Lord Camden, then Chancellor, who had formerly been the great champion for liberty, defended the late exertion of prerogative, not only from the peculiar circumstances which occasioned it, but as a matter of right. He contended, that the crown has a legal, inherent right, founded upon necessity, to suspend an act of the legislature. He who had pronounced the derivation of liberty for a single hour, an irreparable injury, said, that if the late exertion of prerogative was tyranny, it was but forty days tyranny at the outside. The dangerous tendency of this doctrine, and its exact conformity to that which had been pleaded as a vindication for the most tyrannical practices of the Stuarts, was, with his peculiar perspicuity of argument and energy of expression, described by Lord Mansfield, who, upon a calm review of all his councils and decisions, appears the wisest and most steady friend to liberty and the constitution.

above recited have already operated, or may be apprehended hereafter to operate, to the increase or diminution of the power of the crown.

With regard to the first of these, I think there can be hardly any occasion for adducing arguments to prove, that national prejudice does not now run upon the side of prerogative. It is, I think, a matter of fact glaring to every man who bestows the smallest attention upon the state of political affairs, which fall within the compass of his own experience. I appeal to the tenor of political publications, to the strain of free and ordinary conversation, and to the language and sentiments of confederated bodies of men of every denomination, and in every part of the kingdom. Can the most zealous friend to liberty, who adverts to these observations, pretend to suspect that she is losing ground in the affections of the people, or that the partisans of prerogative are increasing in numbers and influence. The political pamphlets with which the press has been daily teeming, since the period of the revolution, exceed all reckoning. Slavery and arbitrary power are terms which often occur, but it is only to render them black and detestable. Many warnings are given to guard against the incroachments of prerogative, and that just deference and respect which are due to the dignity of the first magistrate, have been often laid aside; but there is not, I believe, a single author, who has professedly espoused the opposite system, and either avowedly or indirectly asserted, that an increase of crown influence is desirable, or would prove beneficial to the nation. Nay, so enlarged and liberal are the sentiments of men upon the subjects of government, that if any author should in our day,
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ever so remotely hint at those wild sentiments concerning prerogative, which were current in the last century, he would be regarded as a fool rather than a knave, and universal contempt would prove a sufficient antidote against the contagion of his sentiments. I might appeal to the constant, uniform declaration of men of all different parties and interests, who compose the great council of the nation. Is there a man in or out of power, Whig or Tory, who dares to express a wish for the extension of prerogative, or are their deeds inconsistent with their words? Has any measure been contrived or carried into execution in this reign, with the deliberate purpose of throwing additional influence into the hands of the Prince? Nay, have not measures evidently tending to circumscribe his authority, been adopted without opposition from ministry, though it may have been doubtful how far they were agreeable to law, and though they were manifestly contrary to precedent? I might refer to the uniform complexion of decision in all our courts of justice. Is it not a received maxim, that in every instance where the interest of the crown and the subject come into competition, and where any room for doubt remains either in point of law or evidence, that the interest of the latter ought to be preferred? I might more minutely examine the sentiments declared by corporate bodies, and all voluntary assemblies and associations of the people in every part of the nation. Is there not an evident leaning or bias to liberty? Is there not a jealousy of the influence of the Prince? Is there not a proneness to suspect the immediate servants of government? I might appeal to the voice of promiscuous societies; and with regard to any collective
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body or company of men accidentally brought together, I might lay odds upon the conjecture, that their suffrages, if gathered, would come out in favour of liberty and the constitution. To corroborate these observations I might add, that the conduct of the House of Commons upon the 6th of April was a refutation of the doctrine which the majority maintained, and the result of the vote established a matter of fact in opposition to a speculative proposition, which it had taken for granted.

But in the second place it may be enquired, how far the power of the crown has increased from accidental causes? Has not the extension of territory, attended with the multiplication of offices, unavoidably increased the number and wealth of retainers to the crown? Are not new channels of expectation opened, which have a diffusive influence in attracting homage and obsequiousness to the will of the great personage from whom success and gratification must flow? Is there not good reason to apprehend danger from this quarter? The danger is already apprehended. The fears of men are in full proportion to the danger. Instead of inflaming these to a greater degree, it is the duty of every one who wishes to maintain the constitution pure and entire, to restrain them within the bounds of reason, and to mark out such a plan of exertion as may equally prevent the encroachments of prerogative, and those violent struggles of faction, which are equally ruinous to the peace and liberty of the subject.

Whilst the revenue of the crown depends entirely upon the Commons or people, it is hardly possible that the Prince can aim at any violent stretch of power, or attempt to carry into execution

tion any measure hurtful to his people, or even disagreeable to their inclinations. It will therefore be the object of every true patriot, to preserve this constitutional dependence, and to oppose every measure calculated to establish a fixed, independent revenue upon the Prince. As the executive part of government is lodged entirely in the hands of the crown, a considerable degree of influence is necessary to gain that concurrence, and produce that vigour, which are essential to the success of public measures. But it cannot be denied, that the influence of the crown arises, in a great measure, from the disposal of offices; and in this light it deserves attention, how far it is consistent with the true interest of the nation, to reduce the number and emoluments of office; that is, whether danger may not arise to the constitution by reducing the influence of the crown so far, as to impair that vigour which is necessary to the successful exertion of the executive part of government. It is indeed difficult to draw the line, or to fix with precision the boundaries where the influence of the crown ought to stop. In an age when either the prejudices of the people, or the temper of the Prince, tend towards prerogative, a true patriot will wish to go as far as he can in an opposite direction, without wounding the constitution, or infringing the established laws of his country. If the creation of new offices be an uncontroverted addition to the influence of the crown, the good of the constitution certainly requires, that such power should never be exerted but upon necessary occasions, and when the important business of the nation indispensibly requires it. If any plan had been pursued to annex business to sinecure offices, or to devolve the increas-

ing business of government upon those persons, who are not required to give any returns of thought or labour for the emoluments which they already enjoy, I believe there would have been little occasion to have added to the burden of the nation, or the power of the crown, by the creation of new offices. It would reflect immortal honour on the present minister, if he would exert those talents with which he is so liberally endowed, in framing and digesting such a plan as might be effectual to prevent either the increase of new offices, or the growing expence of those which already exist. Notwithstanding the obloquy of those who envy his power, there are thousands of the best friends to the constitution, who look up to him not only as the most able, but as the most disposed to correct mismanagement, to forward schemes of real œconomy and usefulness, and establish the lasting prosperity of his country. The secret influence of the crown is always more to be dreaded than that which is open and visible. Men who bear the names of public offices, or who avowedly accept of pensions, must ever be more restrained by a regard to character, than those who derive emolument from the same source in a suppressed and concealed way. The very suspicion and distrust which the people entertain of the servants of the crown, has an influence in deterring them from the support of any measure which is notoriously violent or illegal. The Prince himself would not escape the severest censure, were he to dismiss a minister from his office, or withdraw from a member of either house his pension, for no other reason but because he had refused to give his support to any measure which appeared to him arbitrary, or subversive of the
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constitution, and destructive of the interest of the nation—but over secret, concealed pensioners, the public have no such awe or restraint—they may profess principle when they are moved by interest—the Prince may deprive them of their emoluments, without incurring public censure—in the day of his frowns they have no consolation or resource in the favour of the people—if integrity is wanting, nothing can be expected from such men but unlimited complaisance to the will of the Prince, and an entire prostitution of their talents and interests, to promote whatever schemes he may propose for the advancement of the prerogative. It seems therefore a sound, political maxim, that the Houses of Parliament cannot go too far in restraining the secret, invisible influence of the crown. To exclude pensioners altogether from the House of Commons, excepting those who by long and useful services have merited of the state, would, I think, be an important additional security to the liberty of the subject. On the other hand, I should apprehend material injury, if the number or emoluments of office were so far retrenched, as to afford but small prospect of gain to those who devoted their labour and time to the service of the nation in parliament; * because in such a situation of things there is no reasonable ground to expect, that the House of Commons would be improved either with respect to the morals or abilities of those who filled it. A very few

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persons,

* A bill for excluding placemen from the House of Commons was brought in, December 1689, and rejected, and this reason assigned, because otherwise the fittest persons for serving their King and Country would be excluded. It was again brought in, carried in the House of Commons, but thrown out by the Peers, January 3, 1692.

persons, purely disinterested, might be disposed to serve their country for its own sake—the far greater number would be prompted to solicit seats in parliament merely by vanity, the ambition of raising their own consequence, and displaying their talents at the head of a party. Upon a fair comparison of the characters of men, and an appeal to experience, I am confident it will be found, that attachment to interest is a passion more consistent with the public welfare, than ambition or the vehement desire of power and distinction. Interest may be gratified in the orderly state of government, and by the faithful, diligent discharge of duty—ambition courts popularity, and wishes for tumult, and has ever occasioned the most violent outrages upon established government. If we compare the more common effects of those contrasted characters, it will not admit of any dispute, whether men of frugal habits, who manage their own private affairs with discretion, and who are mending their fortunes, are not more likely to enter with attention into the affairs of the state, to be interested about the public prosperity, and to possess, in a higher degree, integrity and skill, and all the qualifications requisite to form a statesman, than those men who are careless about their own interest, but possess more ostentatious parts, and succeed better in inveigling the support and admiration of the multitude—but the former will never interpose in the management of public affairs to the damage of their own private fortune. Nor for the same reason is it to be wished, that the salaries of offices of the greatest importance and trust should be so far curtailed, as to require collateral aid of private fortune to maintain the dignity and rank which belong

long to them, because in that case pretensions to such offices must be entirely confined to men of rank and opulence, to the exclusion of more able and virtuous citizens. Having attended to the single view in which the influence of the crown appears to have increased, and pointed out the remedies which seem most proper to check and restrain its farther increase, I think it essential to a fair discussion of the subject, just to hint at a few circumstances in the present state of the nation, which, without any other means employed, seem sufficient to counterpoise the accession of royal power derived from the increase of offices.

First, the prodigious increase of national debt alone, must prove an unsurmountable limitation to the ambition of a British Sovereign, supposing that such ambition really existed. Good humour is the temper most propitious to beneficence. When men have been recently successful and are well pleased, they will sometimes part freely with more than what is found at an after period to be either prudent or convenient. And on the contrary, bad fortune, penury and oppression, fret the temper, and render us ill affected to all around us. Resentment, at such a season, is often levelled against those whose claims are founded in law and justice. Because those taxes which are necessary to pay the interest of the national debt; and answer the other exigences of the public, are imposed and executed in the name and by the authority of the crown, it is but too common for the ignorant and ill natured, who make a great part of the whole body of the people, to assign those evils to the ambition of the Prince, and the avarice and rapaciousness of his ministers, who are understood to hold the preference in his favour.

Again,

Again, an independent revenue must be the basis of any scheme of extending the prerogative, but the extremity of the nation, and the burden of national debt, deeply felt even by the most wealthy, are sufficient to frustrate the plan of accomplishing an independent revenue or subsistence to the crown, though the sentiments of the nation should run ever so much in its favour.

But on the contrary, a third check to the increasing power of the crown, springs from the predominant prejudices of the people. The tide of popular opinion runs strong against the interest and power of the crown. In many instances, it even would be dangerous for a Prince to exert his prerogative to the utmost verge of law and constitution.

The private temper of the Prince was pointed out as another source of the increase of prerogative. It cannot be doubted, but that a Prince of moderate ambition may devise methods, and seize opportunities, to extend his prerogative, though neither the prejudices of the people, nor incidental circumstances, are favourable to his wishes. But so far from having any reason to apprehend danger from this quarter, I now observe, that in the known principles and conduct of the Prince who fills the throne, we behold additional security for the rights and liberties of the people, and may even hope for the amendment of that constitution which is the pride of Britain.

Our present Sovereign embraced the first opportunity to declare, that the rights of his people should be equally dear to him with the most valuable prerogatives of his crown. Can the most jealous friend of liberty produce one instance, in which the conduct of the Prince has deviated from these

these declarations, or disappointed the happy expectations which they excited in the minds of the people. We have now indeed advanced beyond promises and declarations. We appeal to experience and to facts. During a reign of twenty years, as long a period of trial as falls to the greatest number of Princes, has not the uniform tenor of his Majesty's government, displayed the strictest regard to law, to justice, and the interests of his subjects? Has the most extravagant licentiousness that ever raged in a kingdom which enjoyed the blessing of settled government, been able to produce a shadow of evidence, for asserting that any plan has been deliberately laid, or that the remotest inclination of the Sovereign ever tended to augment the power of the crown, or infringe the established privileges of his people? Is there in the nation a man of reflection, who seriously apprehends from the temper of the Sovereign, any danger to liberty and the constitution? But the grateful citizen will not confine his praises to those negative virtues, which are sufficient to remove every ground of jealousy and distrust from the minds of the subjects—he will account among the blessings of heaven, the virtues of the Prince who claims his loyalty and affection—from these he will trace substantial improvements of the constitution, and additional security for the liberties of the people*—he will with pleasure dwell upon

* During the present reign, the judges have been made independent, and appointed to hold their places for life. General warrants have been declared illegal. The freedom of elections more effectually secured, by a bill for regulating the proceedings of the House of Commons on controverted elections, March 7, 1770.

upon that mildness and lenity, which mark every measure of the reign under which he has been protected—he will observe with what delicacy and reserve, the indisputable prerogatives of the crown have been exercised—he will admire that liberality and firmness which equally disdains the services, and despises the threats of any party which aims at the monopoly of power—he will read, in every public measure, a mind that truly becomes a patriot King, steadily bent upon the great objects of peace and justice, and national prosperity. Good men will fix their eyes with delight, upon those amiable domestic virtues which irradiate a crown, and will be encouraged to hope, that good example, rendered more illustrious by rank

Are not these substantial acquisitions to liberty and the constitution? The first and the last are evident checks upon the power of the crown. The first of these improvements of the constitution, namely, the rendering the judges independent, proceeded from his Majesty's own gracious proposal. Does it reflect no merit upon the Prince, that the influence of the crown was not exerted to prevent any declaration of the law, contrary to reiterated precedents in the affair of general warrants, which in the case of treason may sometimes be expedient, nay, essential to the safety of government? Is no praise due to the Prince, that he did not exert his influence to prevent any alteration in the ordinary mode of procedure in the House of Commons, with respect to the trial of controverted elections, which was to give such a mighty blow to ministerial power? Every one acquainted with the history of Sir Robert Walpole's administration, may recollect what notorious injustice was committed in the trial of controverted elections. Indeed, similar instances of injustice may be imputed to every other administration previous to Mr. Grenville's bill. In determining elections, it was not so much considered where the right lay, as to what party the candidates belonged. It is true, the minister did oppose Mr. Grenville's bill upon the argument of its inexpediency—but was the crown influence exerted to oppose it? If it had, must it not have been effectual to have thrown it out? If not then, surely
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rank and authority, may yet prove effectual to check that enormous degeneracy of manners, which, more than the combination of the most powerful enemies, threatens the downfall of the British empire.

A period approaches, late may it be 'ere it arrives, when the history of the present reign shall be numbered amongst the records of ages that are past. The clamours of faction, the cavils of discontent, the rage of disappointed ambition shall be heard no more. The name of George the Third shall be written in the fair registers of fame, and stand high in the list of virtuous Princes. Posterity shall blush for the ingratitude of their fathers, and lament that misconstruction and malice, which poisoned the minds of the people, and interrupted the repose of him, who ought to have been among the happiest as well as best of Princes.

the influence of the crown is not so mighty as was represented by gentlemen in opposition upon the sixth of April. Or at any rate, without referring these events to the moderation of the Prince, or running up to the sources and motives from which they sprang, considered merely as facts, do they not exhibit improvements of the constitution, and additional securities for the liberty of the subject?

Amongst the important acquisitions of liberty during this reign, I might have recognised the repeal of the penal statute concerning Roman Catholics; but upon this subject, alas! we are reminded of our shame as well as our honour, and that elevation with which the liberal mind contemplates the extension of liberty, and the enlargement of the legislature, are damped by that more than savage opposition, with which the people have resisted a measure recommended by the first dictates of humanity and justice. I am happy to have lived in an age, and under a government so propitious to toleration; but I blush for human nature, and am humbled in the dust, when conscious of so near a connection with those who, in the eighteenth century, were capable of cherishing an idea of persecution, or cruelty, to any of my fellow creatures.

